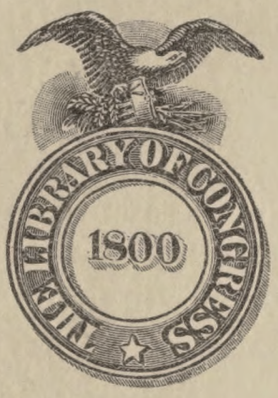
My Dog Days

And Other Stories

Elizabeth Adams Wells



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My Dog Days
and Other Stories

ILLUSTRATED

PETERS.

My Dog Days

AND

Other Animal Stories

By ELIZABETH ADAMS WELLS

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REVIEW AND HERALD PUB. CO.
BATTLE CREEK, MICH.

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To All Who Recognize the
Intelligence of Animals

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By A. W. Peters

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My Dog Days

A True Story

"I am his Highness' dog at Kew!
Pray tell me, sir, whose dog are you?"

Pope: On the collar of a dog he gave to the Prince.

I

At the time in which the events of my narrative took place, there stood by the banks of the Kalamazoo River a large old flouring mill, on one of the most picturesque sites in southern Michigan. Especially in summer was it a lovely spot; surrounded by streams of clear water, running between grassy banks, and by groves of tall trees, where, in early morn, hundreds of birds sang a hallelujah chorus to the coming day. And at eventide, I have heard them say, the sunsets rivaled those of old Italy.

An experience told by one to whom it actually happened is usually far more interesting and attractive than when told second hand. Nor can I see any reason, dear reader, why the experience of a dog, told by himself, providing he be a truthful dog, may not also prove interesting.

It may, or may not, be an unfortunate matter that the study of my ancestral tree was sadly neglected, and the exact date of my birth never recorded. Howbeit, all that I know of myself up to that time, was told by the man who sold me to my young master's father at the great mill of which I have already spoken. I was then three weeks old, and was born, so he said, of good parentage, my mother being a fine shepherd, and my father a noble old bulldog.

My new master, whom they had nicknamed "Puddey," was a fine, sturdy little fellow, then about nine years of age. He at once gave me the name of Lyon, and we immediately became fast friends, he having had for many months a great longing for a dog playfellow.

Of course he readily believed all that the man said in my favor, and from that day, declaring me no ordinary dog, insisted on my having the best the house afforded, much to the dismay of his good mother, who, being a neat, thrifty housewife, found this addition to her family almost unendurable.

I have been told that the first night in my new home was spent alone in the big mill, where a soft bed of oats had been made for me; but my outcries during the night were so pitiful that it

was feared the rats were all but devouring me. My anxious master came early the next morning to carry me to the house, where he put me in bed with his good old grandmother. This I think is among my earliest recollections, and one which I shall always cherish. The dear little woman took me in her arms, and petted me very fondly, feeling, I suppose, sorry for a poor baby dog taken so young from its mother, and also, as I have since thought, because she loved my master so. She was a very nice-looking old lady; in fact, I think I have never since seen such large, luminous black eyes as hers, especially in one of her age. Thinking me hungry, she sent "Puddey" for milk, and fed me with a teaspoon exactly as she would have done a baby child.

"Puddey" had two sisters nearly his own age, one of whom had eyes very like those of her grandmother. I mention this now, well remembering the day when we four had a debate founded on a statement of my young master, that my "eyes were even more beautiful than hers," which ended in our not playing together for all of twenty-four hours. Of course, for once I could not agree with him, for although I had overheard others besides my master say very nice things about my "great intelligent brown eyes," I would not for a moment think them as lovely as a lady's. However, this unhappy day was soon forgotten, and all went well with us, even the severe reprimands received from my master's mother for the frequent tattered state of his trousers, for which I was directly

accountable, failing to eclipse our happiness, the summer days which followed being filled with endless fun and frolic.

Then came the long winter time; weeks of snow and ice, with nothing noteworthy for narration, but full of sport for boys and dogs, and bringing much happiness to me; for although I was but a dog, I was treated with kindness and consideration by my master and all the family, and I knew that they were very fond of me.

Nor was my education neglected, for while my master was very persevering in teaching me all the clever tricks an accomplished dog should know, his mother also gave me a very learned course in polite house-manners. In spite of the natural forgetfulness of youth, I proved quite apt, and often

pleased my lady with evidences of my good breeding, and by many a youthful feat worthy of riper years, endeared myself to my young master.

II

I grew rapidly, so that when spring-time came, although I was yet scarcely ten months old, I had gained my full height, which was, however, below the medium stature. I was not then what one would have called a handsome dog, having from such rapid growth acquired an appearance which I have often heard termed "slab-sided." Hopeful friends, nevertheless, said I had a very intelligent face, and would in time be fine looking. This to one naturally ambitious was very encouraging, and upon

hearing myself so kindly spoken of, I never failed to make a fresh resolve to be thoughtful, brave, and kind, that I might grow good as well as beautiful, and that my dear friends might never be disappointed in me. I regret to say that my resolutions were often forgotten, and many a time at this age did I bring distress to them as well as to myself by my heedlessness.

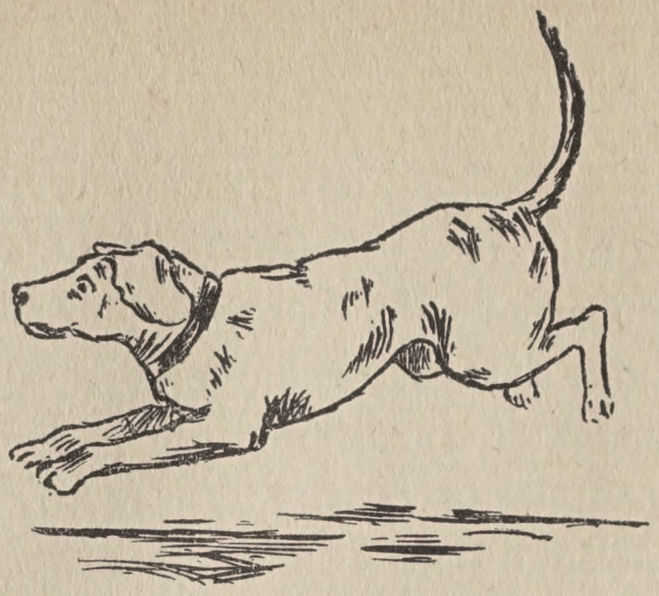
One day in particular I remember well. It was one of the first warm days, and I had been since dinner basking in the sun on the doorstep, watching for the return of the children from school. I was eager for a romp, and to my pent-up spirits the time seemed long in waiting. Suddenly I grew quite restless, and standing up, looked about me, hoping to see some neighbor dog with

whom I might sport, or perhaps a cat to make miserable; even a brood of chickens to scatter would have proved a welcome sight; but there were none of these. I stretched my lean legs, and again made an inspection. The sun was warm and bright, the air fresh and sweet, and overhead the sky one grand canopy of blue, while early birds sang from trees and bushes.

Ah! at the farther end of the garden a robin scratching for worms in the fresh-plowed earth! Only a robin, but in the twinkling of an eye I was after it full speed. Of course I did not intend to harm the bird, still it was with much chagrin that I reached the spot, and found it had eluded me. Perched in a tree on a provokingly low branch, it looked down upon me with an expres-

sion of superiority in its beady little eyes, quite exasperating to one with my disposition to conquer. But to know when one is fairly conquered, and acknowledge it, is often quite as heroic as to conquer; so with a wag of my tail and one loud bark to announce my surrender, I continued my race in the garden.

The earth was cool and spongy under my feet, and as I circled round and round in the soft mud, I was full of glee, filled with the rapture of living in this glorious weather. Away I ran, over the loosened earth and under currant bushes, stopping anon to roll over in the soft mud, only to speed on the faster. In circles and semicircles I went, fairly intoxicated with my mad race, and finally, making straight for



the house, rushed in at the open doorway. From room to room I flew, until, reaching the guest chamber, I landed on the spotless bed, making an ugly circle on its pure whiteness, and jumping to the floor again, only to carry the fine fluted covers with me.

Alas! what had I done? My master's mother had been house cleaning for a week, and only just that morning I had heard her speak with pride of her guest chamber. Just as I was about to collect my scattered senses,

her dismayed face appeared in the doorway, and I realized at that moment that "fools rush in where angels fear to tread." I did not attempt to flee, neither did I offer an apology, knowing well she was in no state to listen with any degree of candor, but received my reprimand in silence. I knew I had been bad, very bad, so that when she told me what I richly deserved, I still could say nothing. I knew that she, being a person prompt in execution, would suit the action to the word, and in less time than it takes me to tell you, I was made an example to all who in their rash enthusiasm think they gain pleasure in exciting pastimes.

The punishment was merited, I own, still I was greatly chagrined; and as several days passed before I had an

opportunity of proving myself still worthy of the family affection, I became quite unhappy.

One evening, however, as the family were at tea, an opportunity presented itself. I was napping on the rug in the dining-room, when suddenly I was aroused by the children crying, "See! see!" and looking up I beheld three large cats coming in at the doorway. Of course the children were delighted. Their father said, "Some one must have made us a donation," while their mother, looking distressed at the intrusion, made the remark that she wished Lyon would carry them away. She did not address me directly, but being eager to serve her, I promptly proceeded to show my hospitality to strangers by dragging the cats one by

one out into the dooryard. They were very large and heavy, I well remember, for no sooner had I taken one to the dooryard than it returned to the dining-room, until to me the three cats seemed multiplied to twenty. Still I continued to speed the unbidden guests, till "Puddey" cried out, "Bravo!" and his mother, patting me on the head, called me "a good boy," and I knew I was again restored to her favor. My master then put both arms around my neck, and declared me the most knowing dog in all the country round. All this was very gratifying to my late wounded feelings, although why a dog should not be expected to know and understand has always been a puzzle to me.

Have you not observed how often the most ordinary incident connected with

a dog's life is looked upon with wonderment? I have many times noticed it. For instance, in winter, I was in the habit of going to the mill to get warm whenever I could not gain an entrance at the house. The office where my master's father usually sat being quite a distance from the mill door, it was necessary that I go around under the window, and bark loudly to attract his attention in order to gain admittance. I would then, of course, return to the entrance. Still never as I entered did I fail to hear some surprised comment on the instinct of dogs as having the appearance of reasoning. Instinct, indeed! Oh, most noble and intelligent man, I acknowledge you as our superior, for there are wise and noble men; but pray, let me tell you, from out the

wealth of my young observings, there are also dogs with wisdom; and when I see a man still believing us to be without the power to reason, I can but feel that were he himself more keen of insight, he could easily see that we prove our intelligence. Our tongues are bridled that we may think, and, dear friends, forgive if we also criticise.

III

In the following winter my master, being a very ingenious little fellow, fashioned a fine harness of leather for me, and I grew very strong drawing him about on his hand-sled. In fact, the muscles in my forelegs grew to such an enormous size as to be very noticeable; so that in a few weeks from the time he began training me to serve as a pony, I could draw him about with perfect ease.

The millpond, which was about a mile long, and perhaps one-half mile

wide, was our special delight, and many happy hours were spent on its smooth, icy surface. My master was very proud of me in my harness, and often coaxed his friends to take a ride with him.

I remember one day a lady guest of his mother consented to ride, after much persuading on his part, and we all went to the millpond, it having been decided that a ride on the ice would be the nicest I could give her. When we came to the bank, the lady was carefully tucked up on the sled. I was held until " Puddey " put on his skates, and went to the opposite side of the pond. In the distance I heard his familiar whistle, and away I flew over the glassy surface at a rate of speed which, if recorded, I am sure would have broken all former records. On we sped

over crackling ice and air-holes, giving that lady a ride she has surely never forgotten. However, I have never been quite sure that she enjoyed it, as it seemed to take a great deal of argument on the part of my master to persuade her to ride back again. But finally she decided to do so, thinking I would go slowly when leaving my master behind me. Usually this would have been the case, but the joy of the race was still in me, and as I turned to go back, I caught sight of my master's father waving his arms to me from the other side, and the wildness of that return! The sled was swaying from side to side, and so great was my speed that I could only check it by dashing to the top of the four-foot bank where my master's father was standing. The lady seemed quite

vexed, and during that ride appeared to have lost all confidence in both man and beast, considering her escape miraculous. I was beginning to learn that a dog's best motives are seldom understood, so I tried not to be offended.

My master had an old auntie living in the town some distance from us, who, on account of her dread of horses, seldom made us a visit. She was a tiny woman, and rarely went away from home, so that when one day my master made the announcement to his mother that Aunt Kate was coming to see her, she was very much astonished, especially so when she heard that I was to bring her.

How every one laughed at the picture we made as we passed through the streets.

The little old lady in her old-fashioned bonnet and shawl, all curled up in the box on the sled, and "Puddey" trudging along at my head to insure her safe journey. She remained all day, and at evening returned as she came on the hand-sled.

My master's mother had never consented to ride with us, but one day, soon after I had carried Aunt Kate so nicely, she had an errand to the mill, and being tired, decided to accept our services. All, I think, would have been well, but when we were ready to start, instead of walking beside me, as I had expected, my master ran on before us, calling, "Here Lyon, here Lyon, here Lyon!" which I had learned as a challenge to catch him. For the moment I forgot my passenger, and sped after

him; around corners and over snow piles, until when I saw "Puddey's" fat legs run up the steps and into the mill door, I was frantic. Never before had he gotten so much the start of me. A large sleigh load of poles stood before the entrance, but with "Puddey" standing there in the doorway my daring knew no bounds, so with not a moment's warning and without slackening my speed an atom, I scaled the rough barrier between us, and carried my master's mother safely into the mill with me. Yes, safely! Still, when she stepped out on the floor, there was an expression on her frightened face which said plainly that she felt she had just been delivered by the hand of Providence from the yawning jaws of death. Although "Puddey" praised my skill in

performing so daring a feat, I well knew my mistress had taken her last and only ride behind me. In fact, I overheard her say soon after, that in the future she should consider "discretion the better part of valor," and not confound dogs with coach horses.

Thus my days passed on, not perhaps unlike those of other dogs, for "every dog has its day." Still as I lie here to-night, thinking of my past life, it seems to me I have been an uncommonly happy dog; and may no man say I have not been useful.

The unusual enters into the lives of few of us, so mine may impress you as commonplace, especially as much is lost in translating my story from my own mystic language to that, dear by association, of my master. For — laugh

if you will — even a dog has moments in which this beautiful world seems made for him; and he longs to break his canine fetters, and speak his better thoughts to man.

Bunny

Some years ago there stood near my country home an old apple tree, in the widespreading boughs of which there rested, oddly enough a small house, the summer retreat of a little friend. An ideal resting place, this miniature cottage, hidden away in its leafy bower, and surrounded in early June with singing birds and sweetest blossoms, with overhead, peeping through the leafy screen, the blue sky.

There were seats built in the branches, and often would we climb the rude ladder leading up into the tree, and sit for hours with reading and sewing, or perchance but idly listening to the song birds, and watching our busy little friend frisking about, now in his house, now out among the sheltering branches.

I trust it will make my story none the less interesting when I tell you that our friend was but a pet squirrel — a little brown squirrel with a bushy tail, and wise ways enough to surprise you. His home was only a wooden cage, about three feet square, fashioned somewhat like a tiny cottage, but with the customary wheel to serve as his gymnasium, which gave it much the appearance of a miniature mill with its olden-time water wheel.

It was amusing to watch the nimble little fellow, his fluffy tail waving like a gorgeous plume over his small back, while with rapid feet he plied the wheel until the shining rundles became one streak of light.

For some unknown reason, Bunny seemed to have taken as great an aversion to neighboring hens as most people do, and performed with evident delight the self-imposed task of keeping them beyond our boundaries. His manner of doing this was quite droll. Often a group of these fowls (magnificent great Shanghais), searching for food in the cool, green grass, would collect on the ground beneath. Then would Master Bunny stretch himself on a limb directly above them, apparently to bask in the warm sun, but in fact only waiting until they were all together and

busily scratching for food, when suddenly he would drop, all fours downward, right in among them, and as quickly returning to a position of safety, would sit, oh, so erect, chattering his satisfaction at seeing the intruders scatter, panic-stricken, in all directions.

While we were all much attached to the spry little fellow, he was the special pet and property of the one boy in our family. He had been presented to Nathan by a huntsman, who had captured him alive and unharmed in a trap set in the woods. The attachment between them was mutual, I think, for with all the freedom given him the squirrel seldom seemed inclined to leave the dooryard, and responded to his master's loving care by displaying, when with us, none of that timidity so typical of his kind.

Mentioning the timidity of other squirrels as compared to the familiar audacity of our pet, sends my truant thoughts wandering away to the depths of the shady forest, to those shy, gentle creatures busy hiding away their

winter store of nuts so brown and sweet, living their own life in their own way, in no wise interfering with the rights of others; and to how they are in hourly peril because of those lovers of sport who with dog and gun make

desolate God's woods and fields. Have they not enemies enough without man enlisting against them? True, those merry huntsmen break no statute of man-made laws, still without a scruple they take innocent lives in the sight of him who seeth even the sparrow's fall, and who from out the depth of his all-love and all-wisdom commanded, "Thou shalt not kill."

It is cruel sport. The love of life or the pangs of death may be strong in the least of these. There's a truth in the words of the poet,—

> "Many a crime deemed
> Innocent in earth
> Is registered in Heaven."

Bunny had that enviable faculty of making friends.

At one time an uncle from southern New York visited us. He had never before seen so tame a squirrel, and was greatly amused when, on the first day of his visit, just as we had finished dinner, Bunny came frisking into the dining room. How heartily he laughed when the little fellow, jumping to the table, secured a large slice of bread, and began nibbling it, looking so wise as he sat there erect, holding the bread in his forepaws, while his bright little eyes wandered from face to face. Finally, discerning approval in the smile of the newcomer, he leaped to his shoulder, still holding the bread, and chattering amicably. Had the little diplomat divined 'twas a guest from the land of the chestnut-tree, he could not have proceeded more cleverly to install

himself in his good graces; for shortly after our uncle's return home, there arrived for Bunny a fine cask of chestnuts.

We spread them on the floor of an empty chamber, and our one regret was that Uncle John was not there to witness Bunny's delight as he frisked among them, often picking up one only to drop it for another, larger or finer. For a few moments he was bewildered, then intoxicated with the abundance; and then his provident nature asserted itself, and he began hiding them away in every conceivable place and corner. We even found them in the toes of our shoes. In fact, we were constantly discovering new places where the busy little fellow had stowed them away.

That cask of chestnuts, indeed, re-

sulted in merry times for all of us. Nathan would put a handful of nuts in a place difficult for Master Bunny to reach, and then enjoy watching his adroit maneuverings in getting at them. One day he put a few in his trousers' pocket. For a moment Bunny eyed him demurely; then what a laugh went round as with no small effort he scrambled in, and triumphantly backed out, bringing a large chestnut with him. This, of course, delighted Nathan, who considered his pet an extremely sage little animal.

A most unusual friendship existed between Bunny and our Tabby cat, the cause of which we may not have rightly discerned, but were wont to say, jestingly, that Tabby had fallen in love with Bunny on account of his beautiful

tail, having herself been born without one; or as our little girl, trying to explain this tailless condition as hereditary, said to a lady who asked her why her kitty's tail was cut, "Don't you know? Why, it's perfectly natural for it to have its tail cut off." In fact, Tabby's mother had also been a bob-tailed cat, and it seemed not improbable that Tabby should fancy Bunny as the possessor of that which she may herself have often longed for.

However that may be, Tabby did seem fascinated with Bunny's waving appendage. It was most amusing to watch her in their play spells, trying to catch it, Bunny, however, always keeping just out of reach. Sometimes he would stretch himself on the grass with

his tail waving a challenge. Then, as pussy sprang toward it, he would whisk away to another spot, only to repeat the antic again and again.

At times when Bunny was confined in his cage, Tabby would go up into the tree, and reaching her paws through the bars, play with the squirrel in a most friendly manner, trying, it seemed, to help him pass pleasantly the hours of his imprisonment, and teaching, I think, quite a forcible lesson in brotherhood.

Indeed, the harmony existing between this cat and the little animal so universally considered his natural prey, seemed to me an expression of the love that each shared in the home, and that love we dimly realize to be but a faint shadowing forth of the All-Love.

Those there may be who from their lofty range of information will smile at the thought of gaining wisdom from our little brothers of the forest; and perhaps in many ways we are wiser. Who shall judge? But let us not in our self-esteem ignore the many valuable lessons to be learned from the busy little squirrel with its shy, gentle manners, but attune our hearts to the words of the poet: —

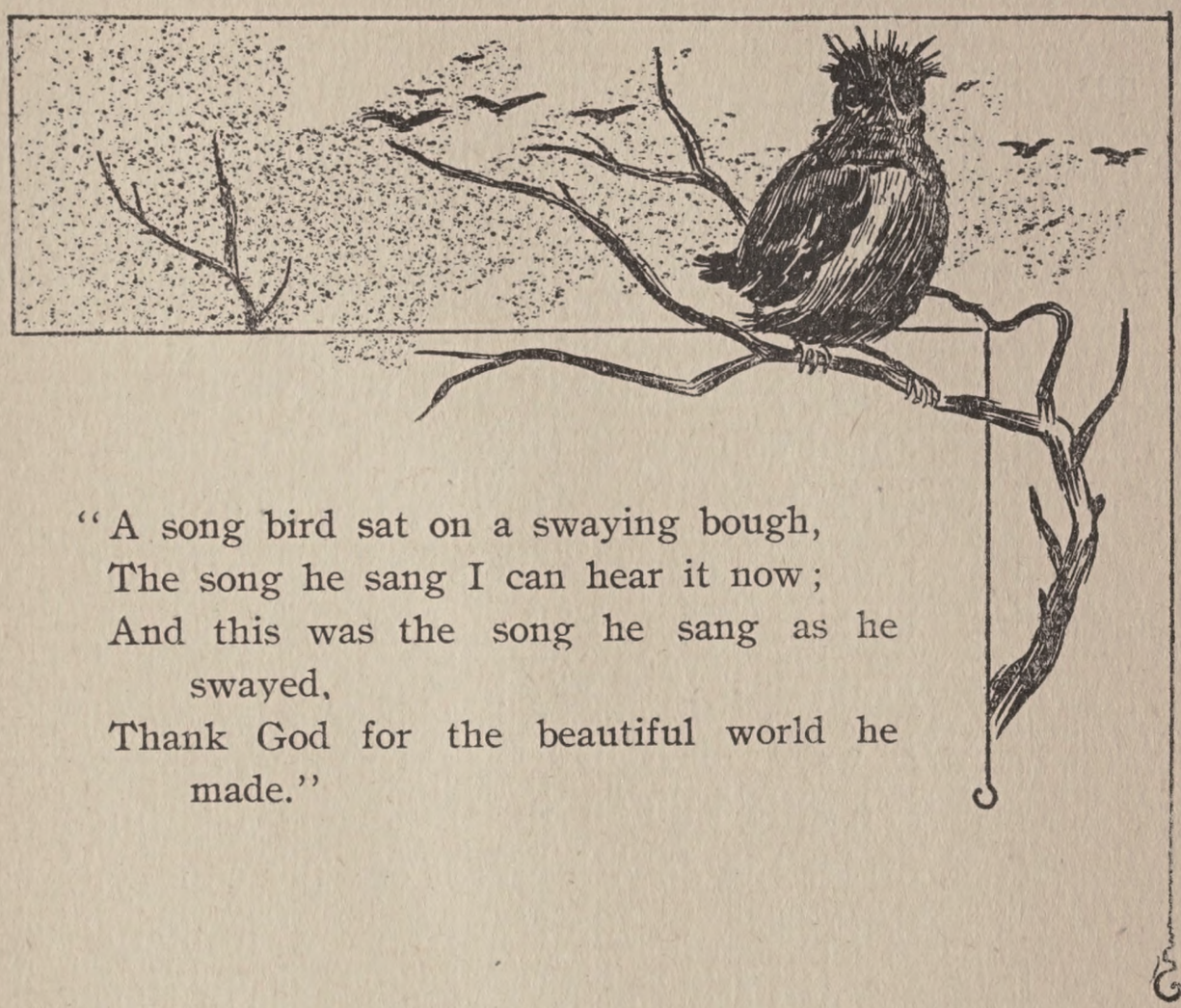
"Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears.
To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that often lie too deep for tears."

And —

"In contemplation of created things
By steps we may ascend to God."

LITTLE MARY

Canary Songs



"A song bird sat on a swaying bough,
The song he sang I can hear it now;
And this was the song he sang as he swayed,
Thank God for the beautiful world he made."

Prelude

Hoping to make this great world a wee bit more cheery, I sing these few songs; and pray you will pardon a small canary, if perchance, his twitterings prove more interesting to himself than to others. 'Tis often so, even with human birds, I have noticed. Human, did I say? Well, let it pass. It were small use trying to prove there is aught human in the heart beating under the downy breast of a pet canary. Still, but a kind word or a humane act will stir the love of goodness in that small heart till it pours forth its sweetest song of joy and gladness.

Song First

It is evening. Between my cage and the frost-etched window a thick curtain is drawn, shutting out all the cold and darkness.

After a long day of song with, at the close, a fat seed supper, I gently sway in my tiny swing, and am content; and, swinging, watch the bright faces at the table beneath me, listening to the merry table talk and children's laughter; then shortly fall into a revery of my own, looking back to the day when these kind people brought me, a mere fledge-

ling, to this happy home, gave me this fine cage, and attended to all my small canary wants so tenderly that I grew to be quite a beautiful bird. Pardon the thought, but what must one infer when he is constantly addressed as, "Lovely birdie," "Pretty Peetie," or, "O, you beauty!" I never quite liked that name "Peetie," but a bird would be most ungrateful who could ruffle his plumage over the mere matter of a name, after all their kindness; and so you may call me Peetie.

The swing sways no longer; and with a good night, "tweet, tweet!" I tuck my yellow head snugly under my wing.

Song Second

I should many times be lonely were it not for the little golden-haired Mary who plays so often in the room with me. I love to watch her in her play, dressing and redressing her dolls, frolicking with her pet cat, or, better still, dressing up the great tabby for a baby. 'Tis a funny sight. One can see little to fear in the cat, he looks so meek, wrapped in his shawl, with his ears tied back in a bonnet, and lying so quietly as she rocks or dresses him. Indeed, I can scarcely recognize in him

the sly Thomas who so often feasts his eyes on me in a way which makes me sadly fearful that his stomach also hungers for canary.

I sat a long time this morning looking out of the window. It looked bitter cold outside. One could tell by the way the ice-covered branches of the rose tree crackled and struck its countless frozen fingers against the window pane. There were patches of frozen snow to be seen, and a strong wind blew hither and thither the few remaining dry leaves of autumn. One lone sparrow fluttered by, then darted away into the depths of the evergreens. How the cold out there must strike through to a fellow's very pinfeathers. In sympathy I shook my own plumage, and gladly turned my attention from the gloomy outside to the

brightness within. Little Mary was spreading a shawl over a chair, and telling her dolls that she was going to play the piano.

She sang sweetly, and I am sure when her small hands moved over her imaginary keyboard, one could almost hear the music. At any rate, there was rhythm in her movements.

Whether it was the harmony of her music, or of the fair picture she made, tossing her curls from side to side, I know not, but my bird heart was stirred with the love of her, so that I, too, sang, — sang a song to her loveliness. Did she understand? She seemed to, for she stopped, and smiling at me with her sweet, brown eyes, listened.

Song Third

My canary patience has been sorely tried to-day. It being very stormy outside, the children have played all day in the room with me, and, let me add, have made it equally stormy inside.

I love to watch the children when they play happily together, but to see them mischievous is a sight I cannot endure calmly.

It is strange how entirely alone they seem to feel with only a bird in the room with them. Do they know, I wonder, that even a bird can see and

criticise their rudeness? Several times I tried to quiet the discord, but to sing sweetly when shut in with a nine-year-old schoolboy, bent on tormenting his sisters, is a task quite beyond me.

Little Mary, too, has had a sorry time of it, as Master Nathan is especially fond of teasing her. He pinches her cheeks, pulls her curls, and many times to-day has called her favorite doll, Rosabella, "old Betsy Jane," which nearly breaks the child's heart. Once he tied a string about the neck of the lovely waxen creature, and suspending her from the curtain pole, declared he was hanging Guiteau in effigy, until I thought poor Mary would cry her sweet eyes out.

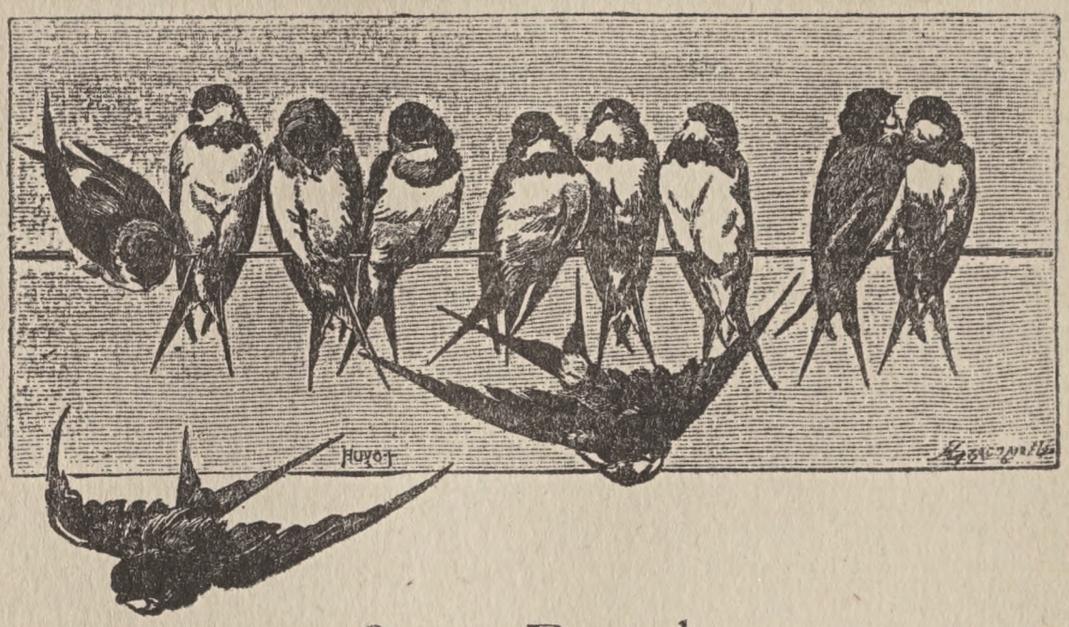
Finally, piling the chairs high on the dining table, he seated his plump

self on top of them, and proclaiming himself "the king of the Cannibal Isles," threatened to pounce upon Rosabella, with all her china sisters, and eat them every one. This resulted in quite a panic, and I was wondering for the eleventh time why no one came to quiet them, when the housemaid rushed in, her index finger still marking her place in a most interesting-looking novel, and took the little girls away to be dressed, after telling Nathan to be quiet, for his mother would soon return from the missionary meeting.

Having no one to tease, he was quiet for a time, and being naturally an orderly boy, busied himself by putting the chairs back in their proper places; while I sat nipping at my new cuttle bone, thankful that playtime was over.

But just as I was preparing to sing my song of thanks, his bright, mischievous eyes rested on me, and I saw that I was to be his next victim. He has a habit which I very much dislike, of poking his fingers at me through the wires of my cage. I have always felt it an indignity, and to-day he looked so provoking when he did it, that my very feathers stood on end, and clapping my wings with indignation, I darted at the intruding finger, and nipped it most savagely. Indeed, I fought until I was faint, but he only laughed, called me his "little prize fighter," and said I looked like a "young eagle."

Later, I overheard the lad tell his father that he had had a pleasant time to-day. Surely there are things which pass my understanding.



Song Fourth

"The lark is so brimful of gladness and love,
The green fields below him, the blue sky above,
That he sings, and he sings, and forever sings he,
'I love my love, and my love loves me.'"

— S. T. Coleridge.

Last night I dreamed. I can fancy your look of surprise; for few, I fear,

give us credit of thinking even in our waking hours. Yet, when last night I had tucked my weary head under my wing and was lost in slumber, I know I dreamed, and dreaming, saw again my gay friend, the robin, who through the long summer lived in his nest under the eaves, just above my window. Again I heard him, outside the open window, singing, and calling to me from the rose tree. As I listened to his sweet, varied notes, full of the gush of early spring, the caroling of other birds, mingled with the sweet scent of violets, seemed to be wafted in to me, and I stood enchanted. Small wonder that, waking from that dream of summer birds and blossoms, to be greeted by the bright sun peeping over the housetops, I was happy; and being happy,

sang a morning song of thanks to the Maker of all that is good and beautiful.

It was the prelude to a long, happy day. Early after breakfast they sent Thomas into exile, and placing my bath saucer on the floor, allowed me to bathe to my heart's content. Oh! the delight of ducking and dipping, of shaking the diamond drops from the wings, and then dipping in again; and afterward, to fly about the room at will, perching upon a picture frame to shake and dry one's feathers; then flitting about from chair to table, and from table back to chair again, and finally to light upon the top of the tallest piece of furniture, and sing a song to freedom.

My cage door is often left open in this way, that I may fly in and out at

pleasure. To-day, when the family were at dinner, it was still open, and being in a sociable mood, I flew down among them. Stopping but a moment to taste a few crumbs from the bread plate, I flew from one friendly shoulder to another. Finally, prompted by a most happy thought, I alighted on the top of little Mary's head, and nestling there in her sunny curls, found my crowning delight. A smile of amusement went round, which for the moment confused me, so that from sheer embarrassment, I pecked a yellow feather from my coat, and let it flutter down upon the table. Little Mary repeated "pretty Peetie" over and over again, and held her head so quietly that I was soon reassured. Feeling that I had pleased her, so filled my small heart

with delight that it could not hold all its gladness. Still nestling among the bright curls, I tuned my wee lyre, and sang to her my love song, full and liquid and sweet.

Human bliss is ever fleeting. The small head moved, and I again hopped to the table, soon to be carried back to my cage on the mother's finger.

Finale

The long-looked-for day, Christmas day, is come at last. With what interest have I watched from my cage the preparations for this day. At every mysterious rustling of paper, how I have looked and listened, and very like little Hiawatha: —

Learned of every one his secrets,
Learned what each for each had purchased.
Where they bought them,
Where they hid them.
Heard them tell the little children
Why the reindeer runs so swiftly,
How old Santa comes at Christmas.

In fact, I realize that at this season a little bird has one advantage the children have not. But, bless their hearts, what would Christmas be without them? You should have seen them last night hanging up their stockings. How their bright eyes shone with eager interest as each was firmly pinned to the mantel; and how ready they were to be led up to bed, that St. Nicholas might come the quicker.

When, after much fruitless effort, each pair of wakeful eyes was closed in slumber, and all throughout the house was quiet, in came Santa with all his assistants, completely loaded down with packages; but oh! so quietly, making no noise at all, save for the rustling of paper and the soft whispering.

Yes, surely it was Santa! one would

know him by his gray beard and merry eyes. What matter, if he did not wear his red coat trimmed in ermine? The children were doubtless dreaming of that, and it were a sin to tell them he forgot to wear it.

It was so late when he came that it had taken a great deal of flapping of the wings to keep myself awake until his arrival; so much, in fact, that I would not advise any little child ever to attempt it.

As it was, I became so sleepy that I could not have told for the life of me what went into those stockings, and long before the lights were out I gladly tucked my tired head under my wing, and was lost in slumber.

My rest was destined to be again broken. I was awakened suddenly by

a noise in the room near me. Trembling so that I nearly fell from my perch, I peered into the darkness, trying to discover the cause of it. I could see nothing, however, and was beginning to still my beating heart, when stealthy steps came creeping toward me. My one thought being of robbers, I think I should have fainted had I not at that moment heard the voice of the father calling Nathan back to bed again.

Thus reassured, I once more fell asleep, to be awakened at the earliest break of day by the pattering of small bare feet upon the stair, followed by excited whisperings in the room, with occasional squeals of delight, as each little stocking was emptied of its treasures. Unless appearances were very deceiving, I think Santa had left just what each had been wishing.

During the forenoon there was much coming and going, and showing of gifts, so that the merry confusion lasted until dinner time.

Nor was I forgotten, for after the first excitement was over, the children, wishing me a "Merry Christmas," pinned sprigs of holly to the curtain near me; and little Mary, placing a fresh, crisp lettuce leaf in the wires of my cage, declared it a naughty shame that Peetie had no stocking to hang up. But to me Santa's whole pack cannot compare with that single leaf from her dainty hand.

I twittered, sang, and did my best to make her understand.

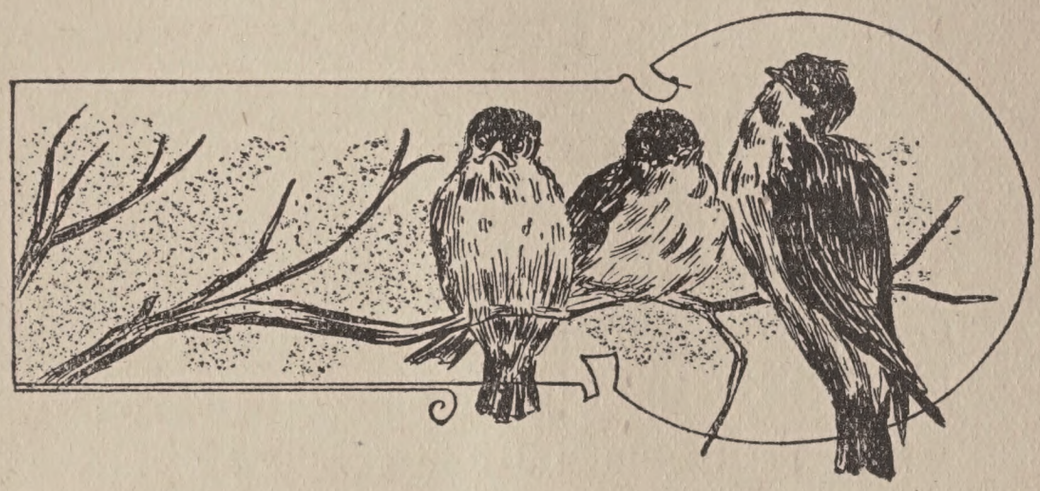
For two days the snow has steadily descended, spreading over the earth a soft carpet of feathery whiteness, and trimming in ermine all the trees and

bushes. The storm has now ceased, and from all directions one can hear the merry sleigh bells ringing, with children's glad voices hurrahing for the beautiful snow and for Christmas.

As I look out upon the glistening scene, little brown birds flutter down outside my window, and one by one warble a matin song from the bare boughs of the rose tree, soft and sweet and low, as if meant alone for the ear of their Maker. Then, as I turn my head to one side, listening, they join in one glad chorus of chirpings, notes of most wonderful sweetness. Surely 'tis the Christmas carol they are singing.

My small heart beats with gladness, and a song of joy swells in my throat, as I, too, catch up the glad refrain, and

with them sing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men."



Coda

By One of Peetie's Admirers

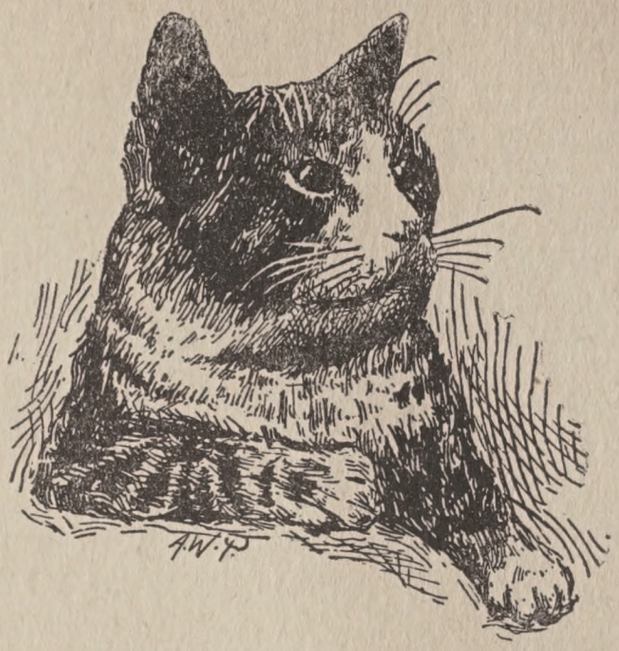
Years have passed since Peetie poured forth his sweet, melodious songs from his cage by the window; but our hearts still feel the charm of his memory in a way difficult to analyze. Looking back through the mist of those years, we still see our beautiful yellow songster, and hear his divine utterances; for while the songs which appealed to the ear of sense are gone, his songs in memory live on forever.

Still, no more genuine grief, we think, ever rent the hearts of mourners than on the day when Nathan and his little sisters with tender hands laid all that remained to them of Peetie in the miniature casket of walnut, which Nathan had made with ready hands, but with great tears standing in his boy eyes.

Indeed, it was an odd but very tearful little procession which wended its way across the lawn, and amid sobs and tears sang their parting song over the tiny grave beneath the lilacs.

Small, sad hearts, be still! 'Tis only the little yellow shadow you have laid there. Peetie is not dead. He has but broken his captivity, and flitted away into the eternal freedom of the great Unknown.

Cat Tales



"Ding dong bell, pussy's in the well.
Who put her in? — Little Johnny Green.
Who got her out? — Great Tom Stout.
What a naughty boy was that
Thus to drown poor pussy cat."

This is a familiar ditty, but let me tell you of the little maiden who on this particular morning was singing it.

Full of her innocent mirth, she dances over the kitchen floor, setting

her song to the tune of the teakettle, and bringing in the orchestral parts with her small fist on the side of her dish pan. Ever sweet and merry, with laughing brown eyes and yellow ringlets, one might aptly describe her in the words of Byron: —

"A lovely being, scarcely formed or molded,
A rose with all its sweetest leaves yet folded."

I am sure the huge black cat, viewing the gay vaudeville from the window seat, agrees with me.

With the hanging of the bright dish pan, the duties of the small lady, whom we will call Roxana, are ended, and, as usual, a lively play spell follows.

While the frolic of maid and cat goes on, let me tell you of this beautiful

domestic animal that I have already introduced to you.

We consider him a very valuable cat. He has seven toes, and is of a size quite unusual. Every hair in his glossy, silken coat is black, while his eyes gleam like topaz.

When he first came to us, I suppose from good reasons of his own he withheld his former name, and we have always called him "Bobby," after Roxana's brother, whose name is Robert, and who taught the cat most of the clever tricks he knows.

Tales of trick dogs are common, but I think I have never known of a cat that could perform so many feats successfully, or that in his daily doings showed so much wisdom.

He can play at "dead dog" equal to

any Fido, or leap over a stick like a very lively one; while in the art of hand-shaking he is quite a master, being able to hold his paw at just the right angle, and with quite as much dignity as our late President; moreover, I sometimes think, with the same latent feeling of weariness.

Our cat is quite aristocratic in all his doings. I have never known him to mew at the door in order to gain admittance, at least not since he discovered that our doorbell was of the sort he could manipulate. Of course this is all quite proper and most wise; still when pussy takes it into his head to keep late hours, and the household is aroused at midnight by his loud ringing, we naturally think him rather too sagacious; especially did I think so on

that first night when, not dreaming it was our cat, I arose and donned most of my clothing before admitting his royal highness.

One night a particularly funny incident occurred. It was in the wee small hours that I was awakened by the clicking of the old-fashioned latch at the side door; and immediately fearing that robbers were about to break in and steal, I gave my husband a prodigious nudge in the ribs, begging him to get up at once and do what he could to disperse them. After listening but a second, he also came to my conclusion, and being a man of undaunted courage, decided to teach the scamps a lesson. Having no weapons, this must be done empty-handed; and so, creeping softly out of bed, he glided on tiptoe across

the floor until the door was reached, and feeling about in the darkness, he laid hold of its handle. In all that dark night not a sound was to be heard but the regular click, click of the latch, made by the ruffian outside, and within, his own breathing. Barely an instant he paused, then quickly sliding back the lock, threw the door wide open, and sprang upon — not the rascal he had expected to grapple with, there alone in his night clothes, but just the raw edge of a northeasterly, and our Bobby. Returning home at an unusually late hour, he was trying, after the approved style of some other gallants I have heard of, to admit himself quietly. And clinging there to the door handle, tapping the latch in hopes of springing it, he was no doubt astonished when the door

opened, and he was thrown violently across the room into the farthest corner. Still perchance not more amazed was he than was my good husband, as he rebolted the door, and returned to his slumbers.

Shortly after this, I chanced to learn from the stable boy the cause of these late hours of Bobby's. Upon going to the stable one morning to bid goodby to our bay Billy, which we were about to trade for a white horse, I found Bobby had preceded me, and, purring most demurely, was walking forward and back on the edge of the manger, rubbing his velvety sides against the face of the horse, which, to my surprise, returned rather than resented his caresses, gently passing his nose over the cat in quite an affectionate

manner. The friendship, indeed, seemed to be as mutual as it was strange, for even when Bobby sprang upon the back of the horse, and capered about in regular circus-like fashion, he stood perfectly quiet, showing no displeasure.

I think the intimacy must have been of long standing, for the stable boy declared that "that 'ere cat an' hoss wuz as thick as hasty puddin'," and that many a night he had left them there together; but as he seldom found the cat there in the morning, I draw the conclusion that Bobby, being a decidedly domestic animal, would, in the midnight watches, begin to long for his cushion by the fireside.

With the coming of the white pony, Bobby discovered that there was a limit to his privileges. Leaping with most

disastrous suddenness to the back of the new horse, he was quite as suddenly, and in a manner far from courteous, thrown off. The frightened horse, trembling in every limb, proceeded to climb as nearly as possible into her manger, while our chagrined Bobby made a bee line for the house, carrying with him not only a sadly rumpled coat, but the memory of a recent suggestion.

Bobby must have felt that his cup of injuries was indeed full, for he reached the kitchen only to be shoved out again on the clumsy foot of our new cook. This may seem to some but a trivial matter, and to be sure the cook did not harm the cat physically. But, pray, what is mere physical pain to the sting of insult heaped upon insult?

Truly, actions speak louder than

words, and I am sure you would have thought so could you have seen the look of injured dignity with which this magnanimous animal turned away from that cook, — a look that spoke plainly his pity for her ignorant rudeness. With his every hair distended from sheer contempt of the insult, he quickly, silently made his way to the front door, and rang for admittance. In a very short time, however, he had forgotten his troubles, or at least had found a soothing remedy for his late annoyance as he lay curled up in Roxana's lap, with her soft hand, stroking him gently.

This merry little girl, with all her love of fun and frolic, is always gentle and kind to her furry playfellows, and receives in turn the sure reward for

kindness shown to animals. Even in their wildest frolics Bobby never forgets to keep the pins in his seven great toes closely covered with velvet.

Although naturally brave, our puss is a very poor fighter, his prudence usually outweighing his courage. One day, as a neighbor's dog was tormenting a kitten in the dooryard, our gallant Bobby discovered them, and in a moment of bravery proceeded to correct the discourtesy. Although the dog was a huge fellow, Bobby leaped to his back, and cuffed him right soundly; but when the dog shook himself free, and with an ugly growl seemed to mean business, Bobby was up a tree in a twinkling, evidently believing in the old saying:—

"He who fights and runs away
May live to fight another day."

L. of C.

The result, however, in this case proved quite satisfactory, as the dog, realizing that he was fully conquered by the cat's strategy, left at once for parts unknown, evidently forgetting the kitten, which went on its way rejoicing.

This interesting cat of ours is also a great lover of music, and will sit quietly as long as any one will sing to him; still, like a true follower of the famous Paderewski, he confines his performance entirely to the piano, never having been known to join the row of plebeians who caterwaul on the back fence at midnight in ruthless imitation of grand opera. Neither does he execute after the style of ordinary cats, which you may have seen treading up and down on the keyboard; but sits upon

the stool like a veritable professor, and taps away at the ivory first with one fore-paw, then the other, lifting his velvety paws in quite the approved manner, then bringing them down with precision, nodding his head the while in time to the tapping.

O cat most beauteous! you do indeed express much of wisdom and intelligence. And why not? Is it not love, that love which is born of a kindly feeling toward every living thing, and the recognizing of the good in everything, that makes us all happy, makes the eyes to shine, the face to grow beautiful, and brings out the best there is in us? May it not then be the love and kindly attention given our Bobby which make him so strangely wise and beautiful?

Then tell me, you who are grown wise

in theories, why will mankind withhold love, the giving of which does not impoverish ?

. . . . . .

The twilight deepens ; and, my revery ended, I draw the thick curtains over the windows, where —

"All the panes are hung with frost —
Wild wizard-work of silver lace."

Within, the fire blazes brightly in the grate, shedding its warm rays out over the hearth-rug, where rests, after a little half-hour play, our superb Bobby and my little maiden, the black of his furry coat veiled in the gold of her sunny tresses.

A lovely picture, full of the harmony of contented innocence, and speaking of the magic of love and of happy surroundings.

The Miller's Horse

"An honest tale speeds best, being plainly told. — *Shakespeare.*

I

On a great old farm, far out in the country, where in summer time yellow cowslips grow in dewy meadows, I was born, a horse. Only a horse, yet by nature proud; so that in referring to my birth, I would gladly speak of noble lineage, and of gold medals won by high-born ancestors; but being also naturally truthful, I must be content with stating that my knowledge of my family tree dates back no farther than to my parents, who spent the most of their days upon the farm where I was born.

Of my father I know little, as we were never pastured together, but I have heard him spoken of as noble-blooded, and he was, as I remember him, very fine looking.

It was my mother, however, that I considered the most beautiful. Her dark chestnut coat was soft and silky, the only spot of white upon her being a star just beneath her forelock, and her tail was wavy and abundant, while from her handsomely arched neck flowed the finest mane I have ever seen.

Her pace was swift and light, and no coach horse in the land, I am sure, could hold its head more grandly; so that on the road she was greatly admired, and I always felt very proud when I overheard people remark that I would grow to be

like her. Although a high-spirited horse, she was also gentle, having, notwithstanding her rural surroundings, very polished horse manners.

She taught me, while I was yet a young colt, never to bite or kick; that even in play, gentleness was always commendable.

The greater part of my first three summers was spent with my mother, grazing in a wide pasture, and wading in the clear, gurgling waters of the brook which ran through one end of it; or in galloping about the field if other colts of my age chanced to be pastured with us.

The men on the farm being usually busy in the fields, I was often cared for by the ladies, who named me "Maggie," and made a special pet of me. So you

will see in my first home I was very happy. Even when breaking me to the harness, my master, being a wise horseman, was gentle and kind with me, making quite easy what would otherwise have proved most tiresome, and I am sure I shall always be grateful to him for his kindness.

On very warm days I would lie down in the cool, nodding grasses, beneath the great oak tree which stretched its wide-spreading branches over one corner of my pasture, and amid the fragrance of blooming clover, dream of my future.

My mother had told me there would doubtless come a day when I would be sold, and gave me much good advice as to what I should do, and how I should act, when I was finally taken away from her.

Sometimes as we grazed by the hedge-row, fine carriages would pass on the road leading to the city, some seven miles distant. One day I remember as we stood there watching an especially stylish turn-out, my mother remarked that she had always hoped that I would be sold as a carriage horse. I, too, felt it would be a very fine thing. So, on those summer days, when I lay in the shade, dreaming, I always fancied myself clad in a silver-mounted harness, prancing along before an aristocratic carriage, and some fine lady, with her coachman in livery, riding behind me.

In youthful dreams, what glittering bubbles we may swell, but how easily stern reality bursts them.

II

In the spring when I was four years old, I had grown, as had often been predicted, to look very like my handsome mother,— the same chestnut coat, with the white star on my forehead, and the same wavy tail and mane. Indeed, we were so much alike that during the winter our master had many times driven us in double harness together. Our paces, too, being much the same, we made a fine team, and I was always proud and happy when speeding along the smooth coun-

try road with her. Then, being with my mother often gave me courage at times when I would otherwise have been frightened at what was strange to me. A word from my master, too, would often reassure me.

Still I think I shall never forget the first train of cars that I ever saw. On that day I had been harnessed alone to the sulky, and driven by my master into the town, some six miles distant. My mother had told me of the cars, but I had never seen them. It was for this purpose, I have since thought, that my master took me that day with him.

I had enjoyed the run into the town very much, but the six miles of lively travel had taken some of the playfulness out of me, so that when my master drove me up alongside of a small

building, and stopped where we would be out of the wind, I was glad to rest.

My master said, "Now, Maggie, stand still, and rest a bit. We are going to see something new to-day." Unfortunately, I did not rightly understand him, but stood looking about me at the people going to and from the station, and trying to discover what there was new to look at, aside from a few strange faces.

Suddenly I heard a great puffing and roaring. Turning a little to my right, I saw a frightful, snorting object, with fiery breath, come shrieking down upon us. When within a short distance it stopped with its one big eye full upon me, in a manner which fairly took my breath away. I grew weak at the knees, and my very heart stood

still from fear and amazement. I think, however, that I must have been inclined to run, as my master kept saying over and over to me, "Whoa, Maggie! Be still, lady, there's nothing to hurt you." And I obeyed his voice as I had been taught to do. But standing there facing that terrible creature, my legs grew so weak that I doubt if, at that moment, I could have traveled, had he wished it. In fact, all that day I felt as trembly as the old horse that often came to my master's farm, hitched to the rag-peddler's cart.

Indeed, I was so greatly excited that for the life of me I could not have told just what I did when I saw that locomotive. But later in the day, when my master was shaking up my straw bed, I overheard him telling the hired man

that I had "faced the music like a good one, but had done a pretty bit of dancing," and that I had "puffed and snorted near to beat the engine."

As time went on, I, of course, learned that when one keeps out of the way of the cars, they will never harm him; but from that day to this I have never been able to face an engine calmly, and I am sure my master made a great mistake in driving me for the first time so close to one.

As I was now four years old, I began to feel quite grown up. This at times made me feel very important, still I cannot say that I always enjoyed being treated as a full-grown horse. It is all very fine to stand in a stable to be brushed and curried, to eat a good mash or nibble the fragrant hay; but when

one has to stand day and night tied to a manger with only an occasional run on the road for exercise, it becomes very tiresome, especially to one of my high spirits and strong constitution.

Small wonder, then, that, having been accustomed to prance and gallop about the pasture as I liked, I sometimes, when put into harness, felt inclined to leap the fences rather than step along sedately as I had been taught to do.

But when I complained to my mother that I now never had my own way, yet was always expected to do the will of our master, she gently chided me, saying we had a good master and a good home, and that I must not forget that I was a horse, and my fate but the common fate of all horses.

III

One bright morning about this time, my mother was harnessed to a light wagon, and driven by our master to the mill with some bags of wheat he wished to have ground and made into flour. Upon her return, I saw that she looked troubled, but as she said nothing, I soon forgot it in listening to the experiences of a young horse that had that day been brought from town and put into the stall next to me. As she was shortly after taken into the fields, I did not see her again until evening.

My mother's stall was next to mine, so that we could easily visit together.

That night when we had finished our supper of oats, I learned what had disturbed her. She began by saying that in case I was never sold as a carriage horse, I must not be disappointed, for it mattered little how well-born a horse might be, he could never tell into what sort of place he would be sold. It was unwise to cherish hopes and ambitions which might end in disappointment, and that a horse must needs be thankful if he gets kind care and plenty to eat, whether it be from the hands of a poor man or a rich one.

I listened in silence, wondering what had led her to speak in this manner. Seeing my look of surprise, she continued, saying that at the mill that day

she had heard the miller talking with our master of buying me for his delivery horse.

After that for a time she, too, was silent, but finally, reaching her shapely head over into my stall, she kissed me on the forehead, and told me that the thought of parting with one of her colts had never before so grieved her. Then leaning her head down against her manger, she was again silent, and I knew that she was weeping. I, too, felt it a bitter shame that I must so soon be taken away from my good mother, for

no one can ever know just how dearly she and I loved each other. Knowing not what I could say to comfort her, I mutely leaned my face over against her neck, and gave my sympathy in silence.

Early on the following day I was put into harness with my mother. Although nothing was said, we well knew that I was going to the mill for inspection.

It was a fine spring day, the air fresh and fragrant, and one cannot be low-spirited on a day like that; so, as we trotted briskly along, my mother became quite cheerful, saying she had always liked the looks of the miller's face, and that at the mill I would doubtless get plenty of good grain to eat, and she hoped that I would always try to do my best, whatever was required of me.

I told her that I would try at all times to do as she had taught me. At the same time I resolved, in my mind, that if holding my head high could prevent the miller from buying me, it should do so. Accordingly, when we came to the mill, I was holding my head as coltishly as possible, and had broken quite into a gallop, so that my mother tried in vain to keep step with me, and our master had some difficulty in stopping us. When we finally drew up before the wide-open doors, there was such a genial look about the great old four-story building that my heart at once quite opened toward it, and when the miller came, his eyes looking out at me from beneath his mealy hat had such a true, benignant expression that I felt he was a man to be trusted. From that

moment all my late resolves and ambitions were abandoned.

I can remember little of what the miller said that day to my master, but his voice, so steady and kind and quiet, I have never forgotten.

As we stood there, another man in mealy clothes came out of the mill, and joined in the conversation with much interest. I afterward learned that he was the miller's partner in business. He also was a kind-looking man, and seemed fond of horses; so that I began to feel that being a miller's horse might be much pleasanter than I had fancied it.

When the miller stepped into the wagon to try his hand at driving me, I did my best to please him, and really felt disappointed when they did

not decide that day to take me, and I was driven back to the farm again; for with the fickleness of youth, I was now hoping the miller would buy me.

IV

It is strange how distinctly some days stand out in the memory, while others of equal importance are forgotten. The following Friday I have always clearly remembered, from early morning when I looked out from my stable window, and watched the thin lines of blue smoke curl slowly up from the farmhouse chimney, until the evening when I lay in my new stable underneath the mill, listening to the sounds of nightfall, — the soft rustling of leaves, the startled cry of a bird in

the distance, or the deep gurgling of the waters that emptied into the race. Not that I seemed at the time to be taking special notice of my surroundings, but later the picture has distinctly come back to me. Even the trifles — the broken brim of the straw hat worn by my master, and the mournful creaking sound made by the old pump-handle as he drew that last pail of water for me — all come back so plainly. And, perhaps I imagined it, but his large, rough hand seemed that morning unusually gentle as he smoothed my glossy coat, and put me into my harness. Still I do not think I realized that when he led me out from the stable that I would never again enter it. Although she said nothing, I think my mother felt it, for as we were driven

along the road together, she kept looking at me in a way quite unusual, and her eyes were full of sadness.

When we came to the mill, a stout team of horses hitched to a rude wagon stood before the entrance, waiting to be laden with the bags of corn or meal, making it necessary for us to wait our turn in driving up.

As we stood there, a sturdy, rosy-cheeked boy of ten came out of the mill and down the steps, leading by the hand a little girl in white apron and sunbonnet. They stopped but a moment, looking at us, and then trudged away toward the miller's house, a few rods distant.

It was a cozy country cottage, with green vines growing over the doorways. Although when I last saw it,

there had been many changes for improvement, yet I now always think of it as when I first saw it on that one May morning.

The baby girl has grown to womanhood, but I still see her as she stood there that one moment, in her white pinafore, with her soft brown eyes peeping from beneath her little gingham sunbonnet.

At last the miller came to us, and from the conversation which followed I learned that he was now my master. Accordingly, I was unharnessed, and another horse, which had been tied at the back of the wagon, was put into my place. A halter was then slipped over my head, and with barely time to glance at my mother, I was led away by the miller's partner, down around the cor-

ner of the mill. But as I whinnied my last good-by to her, I could hear her neighing softly in reply to me.

A sloping wagon path led around to the stable door at the back, passing down which a most picturesque sight was visible. I had been pleased with the front view, but the rear landscape, with its murmuring mill stream bordered by a deep wood, made one of those delightful retreats to which memory clings in after days.

As I was led into my new stable, many song birds from the depth of this wood seemed to be singing me welcome.

From the stable window I could look out upon the tail-race, along the banks of which grew tall elms, their long, drooping branches reaching out from

either side and intermingling their delicate leaves overhead in a natural arch above the shallow waters; or as I once heard the miller describe it, "with their branches touching at the top like graceful fingers, they seemed about to dance the stately minuet to the music of the gurgling waters."

My new stable was a clean, comfortable-looking place, but as there were only three stalls in it, I knew at once that I was to have few companions, this for a time making me feel rather lonely. Then the hum of the machinery overhead and the constant splashing of the water so near — which later grew to be sweet music to my ears — at first seemed very strange to me, so that when at noon the miller and his partner came into the stable, I was very glad to see them.

They looked me well over, and appeared greatly pleased with their bargain, saying that although it had been a large price for them to pay, I was well worth the money.

While thus talking, the miller's partner, whom he called Bill, slowly stirred a fine bran mash, and gave it to me. Then they went out, my new master patting me gently on the nose as he left me. When they were gone, I ate my good dinner, and grew contented.

The miller's family consisted of his wife and three children, his partner, and a maiden sister of my new mistress, whom they called Aunt Mandy.

During the afternoon they all came to the stable to see me, and nearly turned my head with compliments, even the maiden aunty calling me a beauty, but hoped to goodness I was gentle.

Toward evening, the other two stalls remaining still unoccupied, I began to fear that I was to be left at night alone in the stable. This seemed to me a very gloomy prospect, and I felt greatly relieved when a pretty dappled cow was brought in and tied to one of the mangers. To be sure, I should have preferred a good horse as a companion, but Bossie was from the first very sociable, and I was glad to have some one to talk with.

Friday is often called an unlucky day, but on that Friday night, as I stood knee-deep in my thick bed of straw, I am sure I felt it to be for me a very lucky day indeed.

V

Early the following day Bill put me into my new harness, and hitched me to a brand new wagon which, I heard them say, had been made especially for me. It was a fine, light delivery wagon, convertible into a two-seated vehicle,— not at all the carriage of my dreams, still I was very proud of it.

Feeling grateful for all the kindness shown me, that morning I resolved always to be gentle and steady. Accordingly I trotted up the wagon-path and around the corner of the mill very sedately, and all, I think, would have

been well, but just as we stopped in front of the door, I heard a sudden loud rumbling noise as of a train of cars close upon us. It came, I afterward learned, from starting up some part of the mill machinery, but at that moment, being filled with consternation, away flew all my good resolutions, and I flew too! Down the sandy road and around the corner I went at a rate of speed no sane horse would ever attempt outside of a race-course.

In the one fleeting glimpse of the house as I sped past it, I saw as in a dream Aunt Mandy standing in the doorway, her hands uplifted in horror, and then all objects became confused and indistinct in the madness of flight.

When, however, the excitement was all over, and I was driven back to the

mill again, I felt very much ashamed to have misbehaved so on the very first day. But on receiving only kind words and caresses, I was soon restored to my usual good spirits, and the remainder of the day passed very quietly, my work as a delivery horse proving quite easy with Bill for my driver.

The next day being Sunday, I was harnessed up to carry the family into town to attend church services. The miller smoothed my glossy coat, and patted me kindly as he put me into my harness, and I again resolved to be good and steady.

As I was driven up to the gate where the family stood waiting, I am sure if I had not been a very well-bred horse indeed, I should have laughed as Aunt Mandy with her alpaca skirt lifted so

that not only her cloth gaiters but her white stockings were also visible, started off on foot, declaring that she would "never risk her neck riding after that skittish animal."

Notwithstanding Aunt Mandy's predictions, that ride was not in the least exhilarating, for feeling the responsibility of taking the family out for the first time, I tried by being very dignified to win the confidence of the good wife, on whose part it was easy to detect signs of nervousness whenever I arched my neck to get a clearer view of some object by the roadside. We even passed the bridge in safety, though with the usual amount of testing and the joyous bound off on to terra firma. I have always detested bridges, they seem so insecure.

I have no doubt but that coming into church late, after her long walk, Aunt Mandy was greatly relieved to find the rest of the family safe in their pew awaiting her.

For weeks she continued walking wherever she went, but as time wore on, and she saw that no one who rode behind me came to harm, she finally ventured to climb to the edge of the buggy seat, and ride to church on Sunday. Although nothing serious ever happened, I knew full well that she was always uneasy, and shall never forget the last ride she took behind me.

I had been the miller's horse for about five years, when Aunt Mandy, who was then no longer a member of the family, visited them. Her visit being at an end, the miller's son, Na-

than, who was then fifteen years old, was to drive her to the station. Accordingly her trunk was lifted to the back of the wagon, while with her eyes askance upon me, she climbed gingerly up to the seat beside him.

A horse feels very quickly the thoughts and moods of those about him, and seeing plainly that she was nervous, I became nervous, too; so that when, after going a short distance, a sudden gust of wind blew a stray paper across the road just before me, I was for the moment startled, and shying a little to one side, looked about me; but I was not greatly frightened, and could not understand the panic I seemed to have created behind me.

There was a brief tugging at the reins, and although I was again trot-

ting along as usual, Aunt Mandy's quaking voice was calling "Whoa! whoa!" to me as she fairly tumbled over into the back of the wagon, and with her feet hanging out at the end, sat wringing her hands in distress at her fancied peril.

But not hearing my young master's voice I trotted on, little thinking that I was leaving him by the roadside behind me. This, however, as I soon discovered, was only too true. When I made that unfortunate spring, Aunt Mandy had frantically snatched the reins from his fingers, and in lurching against him, had completely pushed him out of the wagon, leaving him, breathless, in a brush heap, and doubtless mentally swearing vengeance on his timid passenger.

When he had sufficiently recovered his breath, he ran after us, and called to me, so that I stopped, and waited for him.

We all finally reached the station in safety, where in silence the good lady was deposited with her baggage upon the platform. Then with a rather indifferent "Good-by," Nathan jumped into the wagon, and left her; but as we were turning around I heard her saying, "That fractious animal will surely kill some of them yet with her antics."

It was plain to see that I had offended the lady, and I was sorry to have done so, but the coolness between the boy and his Aunty I could not understand until we had reached home, where, driving up before the gate, Nathan told his experience to his mother.

VI

It is a wise man who knows his horse as well as the horse knows his driver.

We seem instinctively to know what sort of man is guiding us, and whether or not he is to be trusted. Often when a horse seems timid, it is but from his lack of confidence in his driver.

From the first I felt I could trust the miller, and each day grew more fond of him. How many a time has this reliance in my master strengthened me to face uncertainties.

One morning, I remember, when I had lived but a short time with the miller, he had occasion to drive over a marshy piece of land which was strange to me. The ground being wet and spongy, it was necessary to pass over on planks loosely thrown down for that purpose. This seemed to me a very dangerous place to travel, so much so that after taking a few steps out, I stopped short, hoping my master would feel it wise to turn about on to firm ground again.

He only said quietly, "Go on, Maggie, it's all right," and feeling confident that the miller would not drive me into danger, I went on, but trembling at every step as the planks beneath my feet sank into the mire, making me feel that I was going down, down, down,

to the very bottom of everything. Had not my master's voice constantly reassured me, I fear my courage would have left me completely. As it was, I reached out with my forefeet, and felt every inch of the way before venturing upon it, barely creeping along until we reached the other side, and were on firm ground once more.

When I related my experience that evening to Bossie in the stable, she did not seem to see much in my adventure to become excited over, saying that if, instead of our gentle master, I had had a great lazy boy to deal with, I would have some cause to complain.

Chewing a few moments in silence, and seeming to find comfort in her meditations, she added with evident satisfaction that she flattered herself she had

that day taught him a lesson which he would doubtless remember.

I urged her to tell me all about it.

"You know," she began, "that the miller's son is sent each evening to bring me home from the pasture. Of late, seeming to consider me a beast of burden, he has pounced upon my back, and ridden me home at a gallop.

"At first I did not mind so much, although it always nearly takes my breath away, but of late I can see its effects upon me. To be sure, the boy is only ten years old, but he is altogether too heavy for a cow to carry, as I have heard our master tell him. You know a boy at his age is usually wiser than his father, and so he has continued to ride me. To-day when he climbed to my back, I felt the truth of the old

adage, 'If you wish a thing well done, you must do it yourself,' and acted upon it.

"Accordingly, before he was fairly up, I started off as fast as I could, giving now and then a sudden jump, fully intending to throw him. Let me tell you, it was not to be done so easily. I plunged, and galloped, and ran, but that undaunted youth still clung to me. I was beginning to think myself vanquished; when near home, I espied the old wild crabapple tree with its low, drooping branches. It was my last resort, so plunging underneath the lowest bough, I triumphantly scraped him from my back, and on I came, leaving him behind me."

I was much surprised to hear that she had thrown our young master, and

told her so, but she only shook her pretty horned head defiantly, saying a few scratches wouldn't hurt him, and that she was right glad of the fright she had given the young rascal; then finished her supper in silence.

I, too, remained silent, thinking it a trifling matter to cause her to misbehave in such a manner, and went to sleep wondering why one's own troubles always seem the greater.

In later years I had occasion to remember Bossie's indignation, and learned that it is only through like experience we can fully sympathize with the trials of others.

"Buffalo Bill" with his wonderful show had gone, leaving many a lad in the town filled with a wild-west ambition, and eager to be able to wield a lasso, and to ride bareback.

Accordingly, one warm day Nathan took me out upon the road for practice, riding furiously for more than an hour. He was a heavy lad, and galloped me about in true cow-boy fashion, until my breath fairly went out of me, and the heat made me faint and thirsty.

He did not intend, I am sure, to be cruel, but boys are naturally thoughtless, and do not seem to realize that a horse may become tired as well as they.

Around and around we cantered until discovered by his father, who, looking very sad, took me back to the stable, and gave me a good rubbing down. Patting me gently as he went out, he said, "We'll see that this doesn't happen again, little lady."

I had never been used as a saddle horse, and for days after felt the effects of the boy's frolic.

Although I did not throw him, I am sure I felt almost as great a desire to do so as Bossie.

"I Was Often Driven by the Miller's Partner." — Page 151

VII

I was often driven by the miller's partner, who, though always kind and indulgent to me, was yet very unlike my master, being of a nervous temperament.

When a horse sees that his driver is easily disturbed, he hardly knows what to depend upon. It happened one morning as Bill was driving me into town, we both became greatly excited, so much so that had not my master been sitting behind, I fear a runaway would have resulted. As we passed over a

rough place in the road, I heard a crackling sound, and felt something give way behind me. Bill at once began a violent tugging at the reins, which, together with his loudly repeated "Whoa! whoa!" told me he was frightened. Not knowing what the trouble was, I, too, became alarmed. The whippletree had broken, so that by pulling on the reins he drew the wagon up against my hind legs, making me feel that it was going to run completely over me. I fear I should have disgraced myself by kicking loose from it had I not at that moment heard above the confusion my master's voice quietly speaking to me, and felt his firm, gentle hand on my bridle.

Now let me just mention another experience which I had soon after.

Bill had taken the children for a day's pleasure trip to a neighboring town. As we journeyed homeward, it became quite dark before we reached the crossroads. I was turning on to the road by which we had come in the morning, when to my surprise I was drawn in, a lively discussion ensuing between Bill and the children as to which turn was the right one. Despite all my remonstrances, the consultation resulted in my being finally turned about on to the wrong road. I knew my memory was good, and it was most humiliating that they would not heed my efforts to inform them.

As we went along, the night grew darker, making it necessary to drive very slowly, so that it was late when Bill discovered he had taken the wrong

road, and we were compelled to retrace our steps, wearily, wearily, to the corners again.

A few weeks later, the miller moved his family into the village, where he had taken charge of another mill, and so when I had been his horse only about four years, I found myself in a new home, a small but comfortable barn. I liked it very much, for though not so picturesque, perhaps, it was in some respects pleasanter than my former one, having in connection with it a small, grassy pasture lot on the bank of a running stream. This was a great treat to me, for while I had often been tethered on some grassy place to graze, I had never since my coltish days been turned loose in a pasture.

What a delight it was to be able to

roll over in the soft, sweet grass, or gallop about as I liked! How it rested me after a long morning of work! Troops of peaceful memories come back even now, as I think of that dear old playground, but, oh dear, with them crowds in also the remembrance of the time I was seized with a panic in that same pasture.

Some weeks had glided happily along with little of interest, when one morning I overheard my master saying to Bill that it would be better not to take me out on account of the circus. When they had left me, I stood for a long time looking over the fence, marveling much at his meaning. But finally I settled down to a day of enjoyment and rest in my pasture.

Softly descending showers of the day

previous had lent to it a new verdure. The sky above was blue and cloudless, the air fresh and sweet, while snatches of song came to me from the neighboring woodland. So, grazing contentedly, I drank in the pure air and beauty about me.

My content was short lived. In the distance I heard a heavy tramping sound, and scented an odor so peculiar that I sniffed the air in apprehension. An overwhelming fear of danger took possession of me, and I grew quite frigid as from around the corner of the mill stalked what seemed to me a large number of the ugliest, heaviest-footed monsters that my eyes had ever rested upon. They were followed by tall, frightful-looking creatures having huge humps on their backs, and long necks.

stretching skyward. With ponderous tread they came on. A clammy sensation crept over me, and a cold sweat started out from every pore in my body. I stood fairly rooted to the spot, my limbs, as if in shackles, refusing to move under me.

But when, within a few yards of my pasture gate, the leader, uttering a husky, inarticulate sound, brandished his huge nose toward me, my fear changed to positive terror. Rearing madly, I dashed round and round, seeking escape, but blindly. There being no other exit, I finally leaped frantically through the waters of the mill stream to the steep bank on the opposite side. Coming, as it were, face to face with a board fence, I turned with flashing eyes and dilated nostrils, to

confront the enemy, only to learn that I was not pursued.

The blindness of my race passed, yet in spite of my efforts to calm myself, I was still in a great state of fear and trembling. From where I stood I could see the foe on the bank of the mill pond spouting the water into the air in a most heathenish fashion.

There was but a short distance between us, and although I held my head defiantly aloft, yet from my dry throat one loud, uncontrollable snort of fear followed another, escaping in quick succession, not unlike the powerful "Choo! choo!" of a steam engine. Standing there, all reeking with sweat and dripping with water, it seemed to me ages before the last cumbersome stranger had plodded away behind the mill, and

was out of sight. Even then I did not feel sure that the danger was over, but stood trembling in every limb until Bill came, and slipping my halter over my head, led me back, and put me into my stable.

I afterward learned that they were trained elephants and camels from the circus menagerie, led by their keepers to the pond for water, yet it was days before I recovered my usual spirits, and many a night I had disturbed dreams of an ugly-looking elephant, flourishing his great trunk toward me.

VIII

A few weeks after, late in the afternoon of a warm summer day, I was driven to a neighboring city, my master and mistress wishing to hear a lecture which was to be given there.

It was a long drive, and ere we had reached the end of our journey the dew was fast falling, and the deep shadows of evening beginning to creep across the country roadway.

When we came to the town, I was put into a nice stable, and given some very good oats and hay, so that the

time until our return did not seem long to me. It was, however, late. When we came out upon the road again, we saw that night had silently but completely spread her sable robe over all the countryside. Neither moon nor so much as one twinkling star remained to light us on our way. But I had traveled the road before, and so, with my master's firm hand holding the reins, I trotted bravely along listening, now to the trees and bushes by the roadside rustling their thanks to the southern breezes' promises of rain, now to the low voices of my master and mistress as they talked of their evening together. The sound of their familiar tones was a great comfort.

As you know, the miller was a very cautious driver. So we were jogging

slowly along, when, through the stillness of the night, there came to our ears the hurried clattering of hoofs behind us.

The road at this point being narrow, it was most unwise to drive with such speed in the darkness. As I was reined in to one side of the roadway, my heart beat quickly within me.

The speed of the approaching horses somewhat slackened, however, as they drew nearer, and I was beginning to hope they would pass by us safely, when I was startled anew by a creaking of wheels and a great confusion behind me. A brief but breathless silence followed, filling me with consternation. Many a good horse, I am sure, would have been frightened into running. It was the momentary hush which most

alarmed me,— the brief absence of the miller's voice. My excited imagination wrought instantaneous pictures,— my master and mistress lying wounded in the darkness, demolished carriages, and scenes distressing beyond description. No tragedy, however, enters into this history of mine. True to my early training, I stood motionless, awaiting orders. It was barely a second, yet to me in my uncertainty it seemed an eternity, ere that voice, so low and yet so decided, came to me, saying, "Stand still, Maggie, it's all right, stand still." Every leaf rustling in the darkness seemed to echo, "Stand still." Something within me had already given the same warning. I have always been thankful that I obeyed it.

I despair of making you realize the

intensity of the terror that rushed over me there in the darkness. Like a flash came the thought — a dash for liberty ; but no! that would mean disloyalty. Though life pay the penalty, I must stand ; and I stood, but with head high and ever higher, nostrils dilated, and my breath coming in puffs, dreading there in the darkness, I knew not what.

My wild imaginings had not been wholly without reason. Our carriage had been overturned, my master thrown under the strange horses, and my mistress, in a most unaccountable way, wedged in between my feet. A single misstep, and I would doubtless have crushed her under my hoofs. I could feel her against my fetlocks. Through all my fear I realized that to move would endanger her. Then it became

clear to me that to release her I must move one of my feet. Still trembling violently, I lifted my hoof cautiously, feeling my way over her with a care and gentleness born of years of kind treatment. My mistress was free, and was the first to come to me, feeling about in the darkness for my bridle, which she finally reached with difficulty, and drew down my high-poised head. Her presence brought a certain sense of relief, especially as I heard her kind though agitated voice in attempt to quiet me.

Meanwhile the strange horses stamped restlessly, and I heard strange tones in excited conversation. I listened for my master's voice, for it had been silent since that first hurried "Stand still." Again a rush of foreboding rushed over

me, in spite of my mistress's hand on my neck.

At last he joined in the talk, and knowing he was safe, I gave one long, shrill neigh of thanks.

I never knew just how he had managed to free himself, but gathered enough from subsequent recitals to learn that he had been in the greater danger, and that his presence of mind, combined with his remarkable strength, had served him well.

Our carriage had received but slight injury, and was soon turned back into position once more. Even less damage having resulted to the heavier vehicle, the cause of our disaster moved away in the darkness, leaving us with very polite, though most unsatisfactory, expressions of regret as payment for our

trouble. We, also, were soon wending our way homeward, thankful for our escape, which, in my mistress's words, "was marvelous."

As we went along, the bright rim of the new moon peeped from behind a dark cloud, a token that the pending storm had passed, that that night's troubles were over.

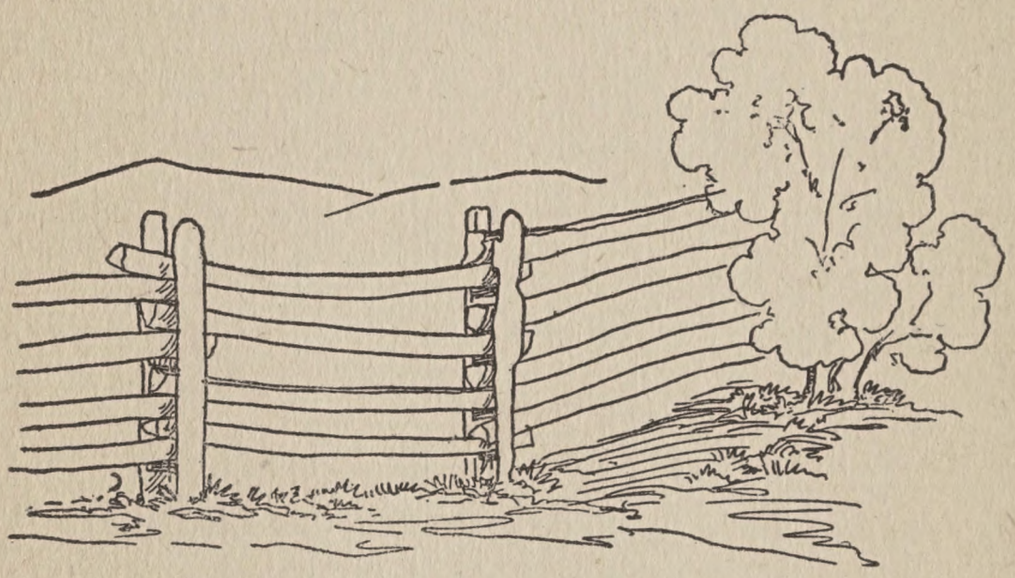
Some two years later, the miller, for reasons doubtless wise, but which I have never been able to understand, sold me to a man living in a distant city.

This parting with the good miller and his family was a sad trial to me, and never shall I forget the look of regret in his kind eyes as he patted my smooth neck in a silent farewell.

My heart was much too heavy for

neighing when he left me, and as I, realizing that he was no longer my master, watched him pass down the street and out of sight.

Thus ends my story as the miller's horse.



Two years later I was again sold. This time it was to the farmer on whose farm I have since made my home.

That was a long time ago, however, and I am now grown old. Should you chance some day to be passing this fine old farm, mayhap you will see an old chestnut horse standing, with her head well down, in the wide pasture by the roadside. For my head is now often bent with its weight of years, but I'm not unhappy. Being well fed and well cared for, I still make a good carriage horse for the ladies of the farm, with whom I am quite a favorite. It is surprising how, when put into harness, the spirit of my coltish days seems to return to me, and I still arch my neck and step smartly along,—in fancy I am young again. In this, as in so many other ways, I am like my good mother, which, I have heard them say, when passed twenty years, would often try

the sinew of her driver's arms so that he gladly drove her into some fence corner to rest them.

Although many years have passed since I was owned by the miller, I still seem to see his genial face and feel the warmth of his friendship; and never to this day do I pass a mill but that the smell of grain and the soothing hum of machinery carries me back in fancy to the happy time when I was the miller's horse.

Feb. 24, 1902.

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